Minutes from the PhD committee meeting

Time: Monday, 16 June 2014 at 14.15-16.00
Place: Building 1521, room 220, Ny Munkegade 120, 8000 Aarhus C

Present: Henrik Stapelfeldt, Ernst-Martin Füchtbauer, Kurt Thomas Jensen, Anders Møller, Heidi Gytz Olesen, Thue Bording, Christian Andersen and Jes Madsen

On videolink: Lis Wollesen de Jonge, Guilherme de Moura Maciel and Marielle Babineau

Apologies for absence: Kristine Engemann Jensen and Jan Tind Sørensen

GSST secretariat: Bente Lynge Hansen and Rikke J. Ljungmann (for the minutes)

Agenda:

1. Approval of minutes from the opening meeting and the ordinary PhD committee meeting – 27 January 2014
2. Approval of agenda
3. Announcements – Overview of assessment committees, exemptions, etc. for the period 20 January 2014 to 6 June 2014
4. Questionnaire survey and action plans related hereto
5. Aarhus University’s revised rules concerning the PhD education
6. Discussion on extensions granted in 2013
7. GSST transferable skills courses 2015 and related info
8. Misc.

Re 1. Approval of minutes from the opening meeting and the ordinary PhD committee meeting – 27 January 2014
The minutes were circulated in an earlier e-mail. They were approved.

Follow-up on items from last time:
- Jes Madsen has discussed MUS with the Heads of department at his department tour – not everyone had started MUS talks yet, but all had good intentions. It differed from department to department who was responsible for having the MUS talks with the PhD students, it could be either the section leader, the main supervisor or another person.

- Regarding software to detect plagiarism – nothing new on this subject. AU Studier is in charge of this.
Re 2. Approval of agenda
Agenda was approved.

Re 3. Announcements – Overview of assessment committees, exemptions, etc. for the period 20 January 2014 to 6 June 2014
Three new overviews concerning assessment committees, exemptions, etc. had been created to be used from now on, i.e. one concerning assessment committees, one concerning qualifying exam and one concerning other requests.

There was one comment with regard to requests concerning teaching exemptions with no reduction in payment due to stays abroad. The comment centered on the fact that there were relatively few of this type of request. The reason being that there are different ways of administering this at the departments.

Otherwise there were no comments, and the overviews were approved.

Re 4. Questionnaire survey and action plans related hereto
Jes Madsen gave an overview of the process and progress so far concerning the Questionnaire survey and the action plans related hereto.

Jes Madsen is still missing two department visits at his department tour, which is why the more detailed discussions concerning action plans will not take place until the next PhD committee meeting.

To sum up points from the department tour so far:
- Meetings have taken place with the local programme committees and the Heads of department
- Involvement of PhD students in the programme committees differed widely at the departments. It has proven difficult at some departments to find PhD students interested in or willing to join the committee – how to solve this? Headhunting was suggested. PHAUST might also be able to help along with GSST. Jes Madsen suggested that the latter be part of the Action plan, and it was agreed.
- Intro, info and help to new PhD students: There are buddy/mentoring schemes at many departments. Most departments have or are in the process of developing ways to explain to new PhD students where and how to find relevant info. Everyone has got good intentions regarding this.
- PhD courses – not easy everywhere to offer a large number of courses. Again everyone has got good intentions to try and solve this puzzle and offer enough good courses at PhD level.
- The tour has been very useful. It is very clear that all programme committees and departments are doing a very good job addressing the issues in the report.

Future item: Discussion of the Questionnaire survey and the action plans related hereto again at the next meeting.

Re 5. Aarhus University’s revised rules concerning the PhD education
The document Aarhus University’s revised rules concerning the PhD education describes who is responsible for what at the University with regard to the PhD education. There are no real changes from the old document. It is mainly updated paragraph numbers in relation to various rules and regulations.

The PhD committee had no comments to the revised set of rules and as such no reporting back was necessary.
Re 6. Discussion on extensions granted in 2013
Kurt Thomas Jensen had prepared various figures as background for discussing extensions. However, as he mentioned, it was somewhat difficult to compare the numbers from the previous period (which was for two years) and the numbers from the present period (which was for approx. 1½ year). Furthermore, for some of the programmes some numbers were too small to be really useful.

It was mentioned that it could be difficult not to allow an extension, as there are usually good reasons underlying the applications for extensions. Therefore, it might be more a question of making the supervisors focus on it in order to catch potential problems earlier in the process and thereby avoid extensions.

It was mentioned that a figure divided into PhD students enrolled based on a bachelor’s degree and a Master’s degree, respectively, could be useful in relation to the discussion on extensions.

Future item: Discussion of a figure showing extensions divided into PhD students enrolled based on a bachelor’s degree and a Master’s degree, respectively (to be prepared by Kurt Thomas Jensen).

At Agroecology, the planner is used to put focus on this aspect in the last half year evaluations.

Leaves taking place during the PhD study was also touched briefly upon. Depending on the reason, these should be granted. However, if it is relevant to some extent to the PhD study then it might instead be considered as going abroad. In these cases, it is even more important to consider the cases individually.

It was mentioned that it could be difficult to compare the programmes because they have different practice.

Finally, it was briefly commented that PhD students enrolled on a Master’s degree (5+3) often have too little time to finish their PhD studies because they also have to focus on courses, teaching, etc. Jes Madsen mentioned that following the international evaluation of the Danish universities, the Ministry will take up these matters for discussion.

Future item: Discussion of 5+3’s having too little time to finish their PhD.

Future item: Discussion of whether grading of PhD theses would be something to consider – e.g. Cum Laude.

Re 7. GSST transferable skills courses 2015 and related info
- Concerning the course Project Management: The PhD committee approved a continuation of the course in 2015.
- Concerning the course Scientific Writing and Communication: As the course had added extra hours consistent with the ECTS calculation model, the PhD committee approved that the course should give 4 ECTS instead of 3 ECTS in 2015.
- Concerning the course Science Teaching, module 2: The PhD committee approved the change to the course modules as described in the course description. It was suggested that more advertising was made for this course e.g. in connection with the Introduction day. Jes Madsen mentioned that it could be considered to make the course semi-compulsory in connection with upcoming changes to the distribution of teaching assignments.
- Concerning the Statistics courses: An update concerning the advanced courses in statistics was asked for.
**Action:** Jes Madsen will talk to the Department of Mathematics about the possibility of offering any advanced courses in statistics.

The transferable skills course programme for 2015 as suggested by GSST was approved by the PhD committee.

**Re 8. Misc.**
No items.

The meeting ended at 15.45.

**Action**
Talk to Department of Mathematics about the possibility of offering any advanced courses in statistics  
Jes Madsen

**Future items:**
- Discussion of the Questionnaire survey and the action plans related hereto again at the next meeting  
- Discussion of a figure showing extensions divided into PhD students enrolled based on a bachelor’s degree and a Master’s degree, respectively (to be prepared by Kurt Thomas Jensen)  
- Discussion of 5+3’s having too little time to finish their PhD  
- Discussion of whether grading of PhD theses would be something to consider – e.g. Cum Laude